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Koster expected to announce progress in resolving Bridgeton landfill issue

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - 5/14/13 - By JEFFREY TOMICH

http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/koster-expected-to-announce-progress-in-resolving-bridgeton-landfill-issue/article_6e47dcff-8bd9-54c0-b871-0f9978b5de66.html

CLAYTON • Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster is expected to announce an agreement this morning with Republic Services Inc. that would enable the waste company to move forward with additional plans to reduce odors emitted from the Bridgeton landfill.

Koster, who filed a lawsuit against Republic on March 27 alleging the company was violating Missouri environmental laws, has planned a news conference in downtown St. Louis to discuss the landfill issue.

Today's announcement appears to be related to a filing submitted to St. Louis County Circuit Judge Michael T. Jamison by the attorney general's office and Republic.

The judge was scheduled to hold an injunction hearing in the lawsuit on Monday. Attorneys for Koster's office and Republic met with the judge in his chambers for about 20 minutes before Jamison emerged to speak with reporters.

"The parties presented something to me, and I am reviewing it," he said.

Jamison said the agreement submitted for his review falls short of a settlement, and won't bring permanent resolution to the smoldering landfill.

"What I'm looking at is not the end-all, be-all of what is happening there," he said. But it could help bring some measure of relief to people who live near the landfill who have for months been coping with foul odors and worried about the health effects of gases being emitted.

Smoldering within the inactive landfill began in late 2010, but the odor has worsened within the past year.

Last week, Republic offered 270 residents who live within a one-mile radius of the landfill to pay for their lodging from May 20 to June 14, when work on the landfill is expected to cause odors to worsen. Those who choose to stay with friends or relatives can receive \$125 each week.

But the Missouri Coalition for the Environment on Monday said the offer falls short.

"The stink radius has no boundary," Ed Smith of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment said during a news conference Monday at the Machinists Union Hall in Bridgeton. "We want protection for all families and people who live around the landfill."

Among those who don't qualify for the Republic offer is Dawn Chapman, a Maryland Heights resident-turned-activist, who lives a mile and a half south the landfill. She knew nothing of the landfill fire until a few months ago, but she began pressing state and federal regulators for information out of concern for her three young children.

Chapman said she was relieved that Koster filed the lawsuit against Republic. But she's critical of the state for not providing better information to neighbors about air quality and other risks associated with the landfill and proximity to radioactive waste lying 1,200 feet away at West Lake Landfill.

"There hasn't been any meaningful engagement with the community to tell them what they're breathing and what's going on," she said. Air quality data provided by the Department of Natural Resources is often a month old before it is released publicly.

A Republic spokesman said the one-mile radius was established and agreed to by the attorney general because those who live nearest the landfill are likely to be most affected by the smell. There will also continue to be air monitoring while the work is ongoing.